

GRAUSTARK

...By...
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON

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castle and had been there since the previous afternoon. In the royal palace the excitement was intense, but it was of the subdued kind that strains the nerves to the point where control is martyrdom.

When the attendants went to the bedchamber of the princess at 7 o'clock, as was their wont, they found, to their surprise, no one standing guard.

The princess was not in her chamber, nor had she been there during the night. The bed was undisturbed. In some alarm the two women ran to her parlor, then to the boudoir. Here they found her asleep on the divan, attired in the gown she had worn since the evening before, now crumpled and creased, the proof positive of a restless, miserable night.

Her first act after awakening and untangling the meshes in her throbbing, uncomprehending brain was to send for Quinnox. She could scarcely wait for his appearance and the assurance that Lorry was safely out of danger. The footman who had been sent to fetch the captain was a long time in returning. She was dressed in her breakfast gown long before he came in with the report that the captain was nowhere to be found. Her heart gave a great throb of joy. She alone could explain his absence. To her it meant but one thing—Lorry's flight from the castle. Where else could Quinnox be except with the fugitive, perhaps once more inside St. Valentine's?

Preparations began at once for the eventful transaction in the throne room. The splendor of two courts was to shine in rivalry. Ten o'clock was the hour set for the meeting of the two rulers, the victor and the victim. Her nobles and her ladies, her ministers, her guards and her lackeys moved about in the halls, dreading the hour, brushing against the hated Asphahin guests. In one of the small waiting rooms sat the Count and Countess Halfont, the latter in tears. The young Countess Dagmar stood at a window with Harry Anguish. The latter was flushed and nervous and acted like a man who expects that which is unexpected by others. With a strange confidence in his voice, he sought to cheer his depressed friends, but the cheerfulness was not contagious. The solemnity of a burial hung over the castle.

Half an hour before the time set for the meeting in the throne room Yefive sent for her uncle, her aunt and Dagmar. As Anguish and the latter followed, the girl turned her sad, puzzled eyes up to the face of the tall American and said:

"Are you rejoicing over our misfortune? You do not show a particle of regret. Do you forget that we are sacrificing a great deal to save the life of your friend? I do not understand how you can be so heartless."

"I think I can explain satisfactorily when I have more time," he said softly in her ear, and, although she tried, she could find no words to continue. He left her at the head of the stairs and did not see her again until she passed him in the throne room. Then she was pale and brave and trembling.

Prince Bolazoz and his nobles stood to the right of the throne, the Graustark men and women of degree to the left, while near the door on both sides were to be seen the leading military men of both principalities. Near the Duke of Mizrox was stationed the figure of Gabriel, prince of Dawsbergen. He had come, with a half dozen followers, among a crowd of unsuspecting Asphahinians, and had taken his position near the throne. Anguish entered with Baron Dangloss, and they stood together near the doorway, the latter whiter than he had ever been in his life.

Then came the hush of expectancy. The doors swung open, the curtains parted and the princess entered.

She was supported by the arm of her tall uncle, Caspar of Halfont. Pages carried the train of her dress, a jeweled gown of black. As she advanced to the throne, calm and stately, those assembled bent knee to the fairest woman the eye ever had looked upon.

The calm, proud exterior hid the most unhappy of hearts. The resolute courage with which her spirit had been braced for the occasion was remarkable in more ways than one. Among other inspirations behind the valiant show was the bravery of a guilty conscience. Her composure sustained a shock when she passed Allode at the door. That faithful, heartbroken servant looked at her face with pleading, horror-struck eyes, as much as to say: "Are you going to destroy Graustark for the sake of that murderer? Have pity on us—have pity!"

Before taking her seat on the throne she swept the thrilled assemblage with her wide blue eyes. There were shades

beneath them, and there were wells of tears behind them. As she looked upon the little knot of white faced northern barons her knees trembled and her heart gave a fresh throb of pity. Still the face was resolute. Then she saw Anguish and the suffering Dangloss, then the accusing, merciless eyes of Gabriel. At sight of him she started violently, and an icy fear crept into her soul. Instinctively she searched the gorgeous company for the captain of the guard. Her staunchest ally was not there. Was she to hear the condemning words alone? Would the people do as Quinnox had prophesied, or would they believe Gabriel and curse her?

She sank into the great chair and sat with staring, helpless eyes, deserted and feeble.

At last the whirling brain ended its flight and settled down to the issue first at hand—the transaction with Bolazoz. Summoning all her self control, she said:

"You are come, most noble Bolazoz, to draw from us the price of our defeat. We are loyal to our compact, as you are to yours, sire, yet in the presence of my people and in the name of mercy and justice I ask you to grant us respite. You are rich and powerful, we despoiled and struggling beneath a weight we can lift and displace if given a few short years in which to grow and gather strength. At this last hour in the fifteen years of our indebtedness I sue in supplication for the leniency that you can so well accord. It is on the advice of my counselors that I put away personal pride and national dignity to make this request, trusting to your goodness of heart. If you will not hearken to our petition for a renewal of negotiations, there is but one course open to Graustark. We can and will pay our debt of honor."

Bolazoz stood before her, dark and uncompromising. She saw the futility of her plea.

"I have not forgotten, most noble petitioner, that you are ruler here, not I; therefore I am in no way responsible for the conditions which confront you except that I am an honest creditor come for his honest dues. This is the 20th of November. You have had fifteen years to accumulate enough to meet the requirements of this day. Should I suffer for your faults? There is in the treaty a provision which applies to an emergency of this kind. Your inability to liquidate in gold does not prevent the payment of this honest debt in land, as provided for in the sixth clause of the agreement. All that part of Graustark north of a line drawn directly from east to west between the provinces of Ganolok and Boswan, a tract comprising Boswan, Shelloiz, Varagan, Oeswald, Sessal and Gattabaton. You have two alternatives, your highness. Produce the gold or sign the decree ceding to Asphahin the lands stipulated in the treaty. I can grant no respite."

"You knew when that treaty was framed that we could raise no such funds in fifteen years," said Halfont, forgetting himself in his indignation. Gaspon and other men present approved his hasty declaration.

"Am I dealing with the Princess of Graustark or with you, sir?" asked Bolazoz roughly.

"You are dealing with the people of Graustark, and among the poorest. I will sign the decree. There is nothing to be gained by appealing to you. The papers, Gaspon, quick! I would have this transaction finished speedily," cried the princess, her cheeks flushing and her eyes glowing from the flames of a burning conscience. The groan that went up from the northern nobles cut her like the slash of a knife.

"There was one other condition," said Bolazoz hastily, unable to gloat as he had expected. "The recapture of

the assassin who slew my son would have meant much to Graustark. It is unfortunate that your police department is so inefficient." Dangloss withdrew beneath this thrust. Yefive's eyes went to him for an instant sorrowfully. Then they dropped to the fatal document which Gaspon had placed on the table before her. The lines ran together and were the color of blood. Unconsciously she took the pen in her nerveless fingers. A deep sob came from the breast of her gray old uncle, and Gaspon's hand shook like a leaf as he placed the seal of Graustark on the table, ready for use.

"The assassin's life could have saved you," went on Bolazoz, a vengeful glare coming to his eyes.

She looked up and her lips moved as if she would have spoken. No words came, no breath, it seemed to her. Cast-

ing a piteous, hunted glance over the faces before her, she bent forward and blindly touched the pen to the paper. The silence was that of death. Before she could make the first stroke a harsh voice, in which there was combined triumph and amazement, broke the stillness like the clanging of a bell.

"Have you no honor?"



"I have the prisoner, your highness."

The pen dropped from her fingers as the expected condemnation came. In sheer desperation, her eyes flashing with the intensity of defiant guilt, bitter rage welling up against her persecutor, she half arose and cried:

"Who uttered those words? Speak!"

"I, Gabriel of Dawsbergen! Where is the prisoner, madam?" rang out the voice.

"The man is mad!" cried she, sinking back with a shudder.

"Mad, eh? Because I do as I did promise? Behold the queen of perfidy! Madam, I will be heard. Lorry is in this castle!"

"He is mad!" gasped Bolazoz, the first of the stunned spectators to find his tongue.

There was a commotion near the door. Voices were heard outside.

"You have been duped!" insisted Gabriel, taking several steps toward the throne. "Your idol is a traitress, a deceiver! I say he is here! She has seen him! Let her sign that decree if she dares! I command you, Yefive of Graustark, to produce this criminal!"

The impulse to crush the defiler was checked by the sudden appearance of two men inside the curtains.

"He is here!" cried a strong voice, and Lorry, breathless and haggard, pushed through the astonished crowd, followed by Captain Quinnox, upon whose ghastly face there were blood stains.

A shout went up from these assembled, a shout of joy. The faces of Dangloss and Allode were pictures of astonishment and, it must be said, relief. Harry Anguish staggered, but recovered himself instantly and turned his eyes toward Gabriel. That worthy's legs trembled and his jaw dropped.

"I have the prisoner, your highness," said Quinnox in hoarse, discordant tones. He stood before the throne with his captive, but dared not look his mistress in the face. As they stood there the story of the night just passed was told by the condition of the two men. There had been a struggle for supremacy in the dungeon, and the prisoner had won. The one had tried to hold the other to the dungeon's safety after his refusal to leave the castle, and the other had fought his way to the halls

above. It was then that Quinnox had wit enough to change front and drag his prisoner to the place which, most of all, he had wished to avoid.

"The prisoner!" shouted the northern nobles, and in an instant the solemn throne room was wild with excitement. "Do not sign that decree!" cried some one from a far corner.

"Here is your man, Prince Bolazoz!" cried a baron.

"Quinnox has saved us!" shouted another.

The princess, white as death and as motionless, sat bolt upright in her royal seat.

"Oh!" she moaned piteously, and, clenching her hands, she carried them to her eyes as if to shut out the sight. The Countess Halfont and Dagmar ran to her side, the latter frantic with alarm. She knew more than the others.

"Are you the fugitive?" cried Bolazoz.

"I am Grenfall Lorry. Are you Bolazoz?"

"The father of the man you murdered. Ah, this is rapture!"

"I have only to say to your highness I did not kill your son. I swear it, so help me God!"

"Your highness," cried Bolazoz, stepping to the throne, "destroy that decree. This brave soldier has saved Graustark. In an hour your ministers and mine will have drawn up a ten years' extension of time, in proper form, to which my signature shall be I have not forgotten

gladly attached.

Yefive straightened suddenly, seized the pen and fiercely began to sign the decree in spite of all and before those about her fairly realized her intention. Lorry understood and was the first to snatch the document from her hands. A half written Yefive, a blot and a long, spluttering scratch of the pen told how near she had come to signing away the hands of Graustark, forgetful of the fact that it could be of no benefit to the prisoner she loved.

"Yefive!" gasped her uncle in horror. "She would have signed," cried Gaspon in wonder and alarm.

"Yes, I would have signed!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet, strong and defiant. "I could not have saved his life, perhaps, but I might have saved him from the cruel injustice that that man's vengeance would have inflicted. He is innocent, and I would give my kingdom to stay the wrong that will be done."

"What! You defend the dog?" cried Bolazoz. "Seize him, men! I will see that justice is done. It is no girl he has to deal with now."

"Stop!" cried the princess, the command checking the men. Quinnox leaped in front of his charge. "He is my prisoner, and he shall have justice. Keep back your soldiery, Prince Bolazoz. It is a girl you have to deal with. I will say to you all, my people and yours, that I believe him to be innocent and that I sincerely regret his capture, fortunate as it may be for us. He shall have a fair and a just trial, and I shall do all in my power, Prince Bolazoz, to secure his acquittal."

"Why do you take this stand, Yefive? Why have you tried to shield him?" cried the heart broken Halfont.

She drew herself to her full height, and, sweeping the threatening crowd with a challenge in her eyes, cried, the tones ringing strong and clear above the growing tumult:

"Because I love him!"

As if by magic the room became suddenly still.

"Behold an honest man. I would have saved him at the cost of my honor. Scorn me if you will, but listen to this: The man who stands here accused came voluntarily to this castle,

surrendering himself to Captain Quinnox that he might, though innocent, stand between us and disaster. He was safe from our pursuit, yet returned, perhaps to his death. For me, for you and for Graustark he has done this. Is there a man among you who would have done as much for his own country? Yet he does this for a country to which he is stranger. But, she cried in sudden passion, "I promise him now, before the royal pardon. Do I make my word clear to you, Prince Bolazoz?"

The white lips of the old woman could frame no reply to this daring speech.

"Be careful what you say, your highness!" cried the prisoner hoarsely. "I must refuse to accept a pardon at the cost of your honor. It is because I love you better than my life that I stand here. I cannot allow you and your people to suffer when it is in my power to prevent it. All that I can ask is fairness and justice. I am not guilty, and God will protect me. Prince Bolazoz, I call upon you to keep your promise. I am not the slayer of your son, but I am the man you would send to the block, guilty or innocent."

As he spoke the princess dropped back in the chair, her rash courage gone. A stir near the doorway followed his concluding sentence, and the other American stepped forward, his face showing his excitement.

"Your highness," he said, "I should have spoken sooner. My lips were parted and ready to cry out when Prince Gabriel interposed and prevented the signing of the decree. Grenfall Lorry did not kill the young prince. I can produce the guilty man!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GUESSING OF ANGUISH.

THE startling assertion created a fresh sensation. Sensations had come so thick and so fast, however, that they seemed component parts of one grand, bewildering climax. The new actor in the drama held the center of the stage undisputed.

"Harry!" cried Lorry.

"Prince Gabriel, why do you shake like a leaf? Is it because you know what I am going to say?" exclaimed Anguish, pointing his finger accusingly at the astonished Prince of Dawsbergen.

Gabriel's lips parted, but nothing more than a gasp escaped them. Involuntarily his eyes sought the door, then the windows, the peculiar, uncontrollable look of the hunted coming in.

(To be continued)

CITATION.

STATE OF SCOTLAND, IN SENATE,
County of ...

By J. B. N. ... Judge:

WHEREAS ...

These are the ...

Given under my hand this, the 27th day of May, Anno Domini 1907.

J. B. NEWBERRY, [Seal]

J. P. P. C.

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Gun metal, Blucher, Oxford, 3 hole ribbon tie welt sole with tip 12-8 heel. Price \$3.

Style 406—Pat. Colt Ribbon Blucher Oxford, Fifth ave. shape, welted sole all patent colt large eyelets, ribbon lace, 14-8 Cuban heel. Price \$3.50.

Style 206—4 button pat. colt Oxfords, Fifth ave. shape, welted sole, dull calf top seamless pat. colt vamp and tip, 14-8 Cuban heel, custom grade, \$3.50.

Style 426—Patent colt 3 hole Blucher Piccadilly shape, welted sole, 1 1/2 inch quarter, patent colt vamp and tip, large eyelets, ribbon tie, 12-8 heel, Price, \$3.

We also carry several styles at \$2.50 for your stylish footwear. We also have Queen Quality for women, Crosset for men and Kriders for children. Our shoes are stylish footwear for the whole family. We will not handle a shoe, no matter what it may be, unless it combines wearing qualities.

Drop in and see these lines: of good stylish fitting shoes.

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